

Areawide Thoroughfare Plan

Description

The basic structure of a thoroughfare plan is a functional classification system of roadways that designates the role of each major route within the local and regional transportation network. These functional classifications are combined with recommendations of future development in the right of way for transportation needs. Areawide thoroughfare plans, sometimes generally called a transportation plan, identify new roadway connections and existing infrastructure updates that will meet the needs of the community's system. Within recent years, thoroughfare plans have also begun to consider the relationship and integration of all modes of surface transportation.

At a minimum, a thoroughfare plan identifies a hierarchy of streets and highways to serve the long term needs of the community. The plan determines how these needs can be most effectively met with minimal cost and disruption to the area being served. The plan consists of a map of existing and planned highways, streets, interchanges, and grade separations. Existing roads are classified by usage and carrying capacity (i.e. arterials, connectors, locals). Once the current conditions are fully understood, projected development is assessed according to the community's comprehensive plan and land use plan. Roadway enhancements and constructions are planned accordingly. As new construction is proposed, more detailed typical impact may be conducted to understand how the adjacent streets as well as the entire transportation network will be affected.

The plan should respect the area's needs and establish a solution to provide safe and efficient travel of vehicles into, out of, and within the community for the next 15 to 25 years, although it may not specify dates for proposed projects. It should ensure that the transportation system serves the future needs of the community with anticipated growth, as well as corrects past oversights or deficiencies.

Functional Classification System

The functional classification of a road typically guides decisions including potential lane requirements, right of way set-asides, appropriate design standards, cross section elements, and access management components. Functional classification also has implications for the financing of roadway improvements, as most types of federal funding are not available for roads that are classified as "local." Functional classifications are defined in the context of the overall roadway network to provide a balanced system that meets both travel and access needs. Failure to provide a well-planned network of streets in a variety of functional classifications can result in congested streets that were not designed for high traffic volumes, cut through traffic on neighborhood streets, high crash rates and other operational problems.

Four typical classifications are used in thoroughfare plans: freeways, arterials, collectors, and local streets. With the exception of fully controlled access freeway facilities, all roadways serve some combination of through travel and access to property. Roadways that are primarily intended for traffic service (typically for longer trips) are referred to as arterials. Collector roadways make a link between arterials and local streets. Local streets are those intended primarily for access to abutting land parcels. In many ways, the functional classification system for a network of roadways is analogous to a tree, with the arterials serving as the trunk, the collectors serving as the branches, and local streets serving as the twigs that tie directly with the leaves (representing individual land parcels).

Location and Alignment

It is important to note that road locations and layouts are not completely established in a thoroughfare plan. Proposed upgrades, new roads, and additional services are recommendations for elected officials and transportation departments to follow as development occurs. As the need for roadway upgrades and additions arise, additional site specific planning will be necessary.

Areawide Thoroughfare Plan

Relevant Statutes

- Federal Guidelines ISTEA, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU
- Indiana Code – Title 8: Utilities and Transportation

Capacity Recommendations

Major thoroughfare plans, especially those integrating multimodal transportation, generally require the assistance of or guidance from specialized transportation planners. The implementation of such plans requires significant financial sources due to the scale of infrastructure improvements and additions.

Guidelines / Considerations for Implementation

- A comprehensive thoroughfare plan considers all modes of transportation.
- Balances the rights of property owners to reasonable access with the public need for efficient traffic flow.
- Functional Classification Map
- Federal Guidelines ISTEA, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU
- Should correspond with local development ordinance requirements for right-of-way, building setback, and construction projects.
- Should relate to other planning documents such as Comprehensive Plans or Sub-Area Plans to assist in achieving the community's overall visions and development.

Example Ordinances

No example ordinances are available for this tool.

Example Studies

- **Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan – Greenville, NC:** The Greenville Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan was adopted by the Greenville Urban Area MPO in December 2004 and the North Carolina Board of Transportation in February 2005. The Greenville Urban Area Thoroughfare Plan addresses transportation needs in the City of Greenville as well as smaller surrounding towns and portions of the county for a period of 20 years. The plan website includes the text of the full report as well as maps and drawings of roadway projects. [\[http://www.greenvillenc.gov/departments/public_works_dept/information/default.aspx?id=338\]](http://www.greenvillenc.gov/departments/public_works_dept/information/default.aspx?id=338)
- **City of Winston-Salem, NC Thoroughfare Plan:** The adopted thoroughfare plan map for the Winston-Salem Urban Area includes a technical report, street and highway tables, regional classification maps, and typical road cross-sections. The plan is a combination of existing conditions, proposed upgrades, and additional roads for each roadway classification. [\[http://www.ci.winston-salem.nc.us/Home/Departments/Transportation/Planning/Articles/ThoroughfarePlan\]](http://www.ci.winston-salem.nc.us/Home/Departments/Transportation/Planning/Articles/ThoroughfarePlan)
- **Multimodal Transportation Plan – Mercer County, WV:** The Mercer County Multi-Modal Transportation Plan was initiated in November 1999 for the purpose of assessing the existing conditions and overall operation of the transportation system throughout the county and to develop an improvement strategy consistent with the needs in the base year (2000) and within a future planning period covering 25 years (2025). The Plan and its recommended improvements serve as a guide for decision-making by state, county and local officials for improving the movement of people and goods within and through Mercer County. [\[http://www.wvdot.com/3_roadways/rp/\]](http://www.wvdot.com/3_roadways/rp/)

Areawide Thoroughfare Plan

Helpful References and Links

- **Promoting Multi-Modal Transportation:** As part of a toolbox for creating vital communities, this reference promotes the use of multi-modal transportation that encourages economic growth, safety, compact development, physical health, and lower environmental impacts. [\[http://www.co.tompkins.ny.us/planning/vct/7.html\]](http://www.co.tompkins.ny.us/planning/vct/7.html)
- **Rural Transit Program – State of Indiana Department of Transportation:** The Federal Section 5311 Program was created via the Federal Transit Act of 1964 to provide public transportation in non-urbanized areas (population of 50,000 or less). The goal of the program is to provide transportation to people living in rural areas where mobility is limited because of the lack of access to public transportation. The program uses federal and state funds to support the operation of rural transportation systems. Eligible systems annually apply and receive funding for operating and capital costs. [\[http://www.in.gov/dot/modetrans/bus/tran_7.html\]](http://www.in.gov/dot/modetrans/bus/tran_7.html)
- **Surface Transportation Funding – National Conference of State Legislatures:** This report discusses a variety of federal, state, and local funding options that states have available to support various transportation projects. It focuses on different modes of transportation including vehicle and public transit. [\[http://www.ncsl.org/print/transportation/item014233.pdf\]](http://www.ncsl.org/print/transportation/item014233.pdf)

Helpful Contacts

- **American Planning Association Planning Advisory Service:** This service, provided by the American Planning Association, is intended to help communities obtain information about different planning topics and to answer planning questions. Communities may subscribe to the service or seek assistance on an as-needed basis. The service utilizes a vast amount of resources to answer any question and provide information such as sample ordinances, reports, etc.

Contact:

American Planning Association
Planning Advisory Service
122 S. Michigan Ave., Suite 1600
Chicago, IL 60603
Phone: 312-431-9100
Fax: 312-431-9985
pas@planning.org

- **Community Based Projects (CBP) – Ball State University's College of Architecture and Planning** hosts an outreach and service program using students for fairly elementary technical assistance on a variety of small town and rural issues, including comprehensive plans.

Community Based Projects
College of Architecture and Planning
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306
(765) 285-1350
cbp@bsu.edu
<http://www.bsu.edu/cbp/>

Areawide Thoroughfare Plan

- **Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT)**

Steve Smith ssmith@indot.in.gov

or

Daniel Buck dbuck@indot.in.gov

100 N. Senate Ave.

Room IGCN 755

Indianapolis, IN 46204

Phone: (317) 232-5533

- **Indiana Planning Association List of Consultants** – This resource lists numerous private consulting firms that offer planning services. Some of the most common tasks performed by consultants are the formation of comprehensive plans, corridor studies, zoning ordinances, and other development plans and regulations. However, the resource is only available to Indiana Planning Association members.

Indiana Planning Association

PO Box 44804

Indianapolis, IN 46244

(317) 767-7780

<http://www.indianaplanning.com>

Other Possible Funding Sources

- **FTA - SAFETEA-LU Metropolitan and Statewide Planning** - These programs provide funding to support cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive planning for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas and statewide.
 - o 49 USC §5303 – Metropolitan Planning
 - o 49 USC §5304 – Statewide Planning
 - o 49 USC §5305 – Planning Programs [\[http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3563.html\]](http://www.fta.dot.gov/funding/grants/grants_financing_3563.html)

Program Objectives and Issues Addressed

- Growth management: transportation planning
- Transportation/Infrastructure
- Roads
- Trails
- Greenways
- Access Management
- Multi-modal transportation

See Also

- Comprehensive Corridor Plan
- Access Management Plan & Policies
- Areawide Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan
- Traffic Impact Study Guidelines